

Message Text

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43

ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5372

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINR, PINT, CT

SUBJ: BACKGROUND ON NEWLY APPOINTED CAR PRIME MINISTER DOMETIEN

REF: STATE 2496 (NOTAL)

1. MADAME ELISABETH DOMETIEN WAS BORN ABOUT 1932 IN BANGUI AND RAISED IN THE LOBAYE AREA BETWEEN BANGUI AND THE CONGO BORDER. SHE IS OF THE SMALL M'BAKA TRIBE WHICH INHABITS THAT REGION AND WHICH HAS PRODUCED ALL THREE OF THE CAR PRESIDENTS INCLUDING BOKASSA. SHE SPEAKS M'BAKA AND SANGHO (THE LINGUA FRANCA OF THE CAR) BUT ALMOST NO FRENCH. SHE IS SAID TO BE ILLITERATE. DESPITE THIS, MADAME DOMITIEEN IS CONSIDERED TO POSSESS GOOD NATIVE INTELLIGENCE AND QUALITIES OF CUNNING WHICH SHE WAS NEVER ABLE TO SHARPEN THROUGH FORMAL EDUCATION.

2. MME DOMETIEN'S HUSBAND IS DECEASED. SHE IS NOT BELIEVED TO HAVE REMARRIED. SHE HAS ONE DAUGHTER, MADAME KOMBA, WHO WORKS AS A FINANCIAL CONTROLLER AT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE (GOVERNMENT HEADQUARTERS). DOMETIEN OWNS REAL PROPERTY NEAR THE CENTER OF BANGUI, ESTIMATED IN VALUE AT DOLLARS 190,000, WHICH IS PRESENTLY BEING RENTED.

3. DOMETIEN BEGAN POLITICAL CAREER IN 1951, WHEN SHE JOINED MESAN (COUNTRY'S ONLY POLITICAL PARTY) NOT LONG AFTER IT WAS FOUNDED IN AUGUST 1950. SHE HAD STEADILY WORKED HER WAY UP
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THROUGH THE RANKS BY HARD WORK AND FIRMNESS. SHE SERVED AS CHEF

DU CABINET OF MESAN UNDER LATE PRESIDENT BOGANDA WHO DOMINATED MESAN UNTIL HIS DEATH IN AIRPLANE CRASH IN 1959. BOGANDA'S SUCCESSOR DAVID DACKO KEPT MADAME DOMETIEN IN PROMINENT POLITICAL POSITIONS, AND SHE ADVANCED TO BECOME PRESIDENT OF MESAN'S FEMININE SUB-SECTION AND SIMULTANEOUSLY VICE PRESIDENT OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN WOMEN'S UNION (UFCA), AN APOLITICAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION FOUNDED IN FEBRUARY 1960. DOMETIEN WAS ELECTED TO HER PRESENT POST AS MESAN VICE-PRESIDENT ABOUT 1969. ON FEBRUARY 14, 1970, SHE WAS NAMED TO THE RANK OF OFFICER IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN ORDER OF MERIT.

4. DOMETIEN OWES PRESENT POSITION LARGELY TO CLOSE PERSONAL AND FAMILIAL TIES TO PRESIDENT BOKASSA. THE APPOINTMENT IS ALSO IN PART A REWARD FOR FIRM LEADERSHIP SHE HAS GIVEN TO MESAN, UNDER HER DIRECTION, MESAN MADE BOKASSA PRESIDENT FOR LIFE OF THE CAR AND OF MESAN IN FEBRUARY 1972 AND MORE RECENTLY IN MAY 1974 MARSHAL OF THE CAR. DOMETIEN APPOINTMENT ALSO BASED ON EXPECTATION SHE WILL CONTINUE TO BE ABLE DELIVER INTERNAL SUPPORT, PARTICULARLY AMONG CAR WOMEN, FOR BOKASSA'S POLICIES ALTHOUGH SHE ENJOYS WIDE RESPECT IN CENTRAL AFRICAN MALE CIRCLES AS WELL.

5. SHE IS A TALL, BULKY WOMAN WEIGHING WELL OVER 200 POUNDS. SHE IS WIDELY FEARED AND DELIVERS LONG ANIMATED SPEECHES IN SANGHO OF RABBLE ROUSING VARIETY.

6. ALTHOUGH SHE HAS REPRESENTED THE CAR ABROAD ON SUCH OCCASIONS AS CAMEROONIAN INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION IN 1970 SHE IS ALMOST TOTALLY LACKING IN INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE. LACKING FRENCH OR ANY OTHER WORLD LANGUAGE, MADAME DOMETIEN MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN INTERPRETOR.

7. PHOTO AND ADDITIONAL BIO BEING POUCHED JANUARY 11.

8. FOR PARIS: EMBASSY RECEIVED PHONE CALL FROM AP CORRESPONDENT PARIS JANUARY 7 SEEKING BIO INFO ON DOMETIEN. HE SAID HE HAD HAD NO LUCK WITH CAR EMBASSY PARIS. AFTER REFERRING HIM TO AGENCE CENTRAFRIC PRESS IN BANGUI, EMBOFF SAID THAT WE WOULD TRY TO DEVELOP INFO AND PASS TO EMBASSY PARIS. HAVE NO OBJECTION TO YOUR PASSING ON CAREFULLY SANITIZED PORTIONS OF FOREGOING SHOULD AP CORRESPONDENT CHECK WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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YOU. GOCAR IS ONLY NOW PREPARING BIO DATA FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION.

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